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New Leader for C. I. A.

THE CENTRAL Intelligence Agency gets a new leader at a time when it is involved in fresh controversy. President Johnson has named a career intelligence officer, Deputy Director Richard Helms, to succeed Admiral Raborn as chief of the agency. This welcome change comes as a compromise is sought on closer supervision of the C. I. A. by Congress.

As a career man involved principally in administration, Mr. Helms has not had to front for the agency in its relations with Congress. This was Admiral Raborn's job and apparently he wasn't too successful. We wish Mr. Helms better luck but even his bright promise could be tarnished if he gets caught in the middle of the dispute over an expanded congressional watchdog committee.

Since the C. I. A. is reputed to figure at times in important foreign policy matters, it is argued with some logic that three members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee should be added to a group from the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees which exert some sort of supervision over the C. I. A. There is strong opposition to this by Senator Richard B. Russell, who heads the watchdog group.

We hope that an acceptable compromise can be worked out without subjecting the dispute to an airing on the Senate floor where the majority leader, Senator Mansfield, has predicted that "fearful things might be said that would not help the agency or the Senate."

Too many fearful things have already been said publicly about the C. I. A. and that's why it needed new leadership and closer congressional accountability. We would hope that this can be achieved without exposing secret activities of an agency which, if operated properly, would remain out of the public spotlight.